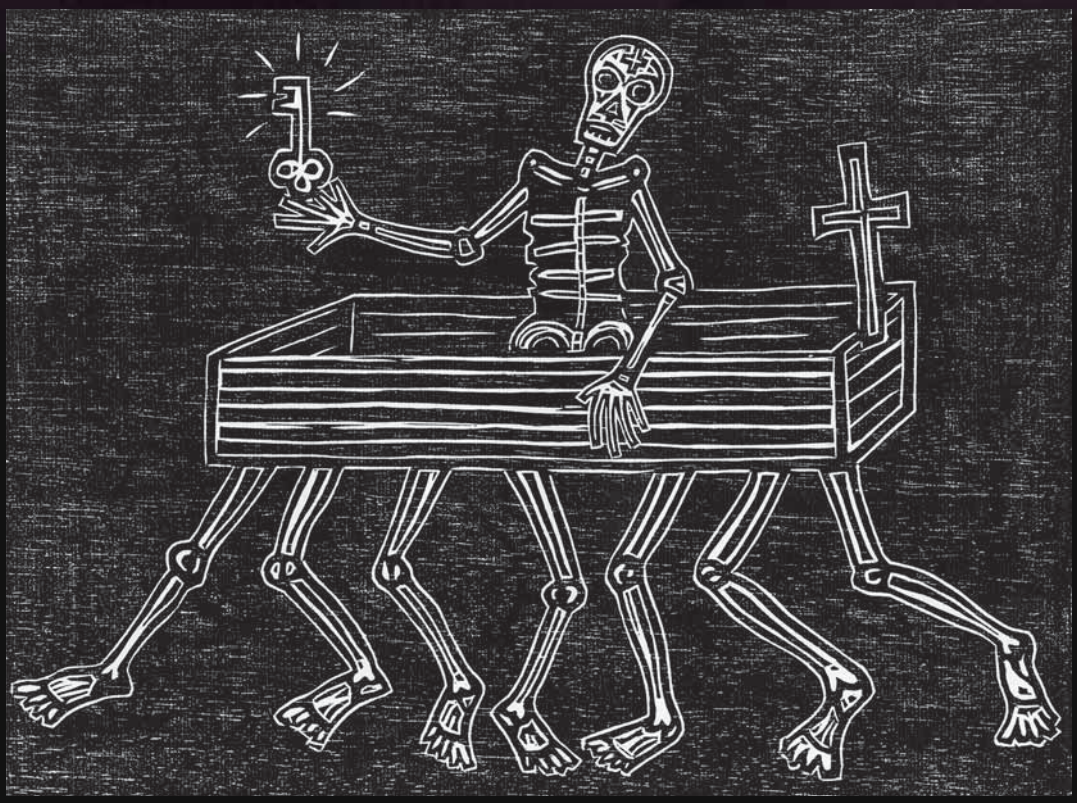
Dark Latitudes

Mapping Gothic Sites and Mediums



Ilse Bussing López
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Editors

EDITORIAL UCR

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CONTENTS

CONTEMPORARY GOTHIC

VAMPIRES

GENDER STUDIES

AESTHETICS AND THE ARTS

19TH CENTURY GOTHIC

FROM EDWARDS TO LOVECRAFT: THE GHOST OF DETERMINISM IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Alejandra Giangiulio, Universidad Nacional and
Joe Montenegro, Universidad Nacional, Universidad de Costa Rica

> O wretched man that I am!
> Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?
>
> Romans 7:24

Religion has manipulated the Christian view of humanity and its fate in as many ways as there are images of the cross. This is not to say that many of those ideas have not been valuable enough or, at the very least, effective enough to spread the gospel–which is indeed the ultimate aim of Christianity. Rather, this means that preachers, priests, and pastors all around the world and throughout time have dealt with this topic in ways that clearly reflect the necessities of their congregations and their times. Expressly in the United States, Providence has played a preponderant role in the ideological shaping of the nation. From the very reasons why the Protestant pilgrims came to settle in New England in the first place to the *In-God-We-Trust* affirmation that now appears in every one-dollar bill, the Christian mentality with regards to fate has permeated the social, political, philosophical, moral, and even economic institutions of this country. One effect of such phenomenon is the notion of sin and its powerful drive when it comes to explaining the destiny of mankind and thus of the American nation. Such has been the weight of sin that it has Gothicized American literature throughout and has established a tight connection between what is taught about fate and the afterlife and the responses that they arouse. For Jonathan Edwards, for example, sin had to be amputated from society lest it drag every one of its members to the eternal fire. But for H. P. Lovecraft, more than a religious concept, sin was a philosophical impression of Gothic decadence. For the former, mankind was destined to suffer, and the preconception of that suffering was a useful tool to prevent churchgoers from sinning; for the latter, humanity is sickly doomed, and hell is already being hopelessly endured on earth, regardless of which level of sinfulness anyone is.

Admitting one's sin means becoming vulnerable, and having to face the consequences implies damnation, but trying to imagine what those consequences might be may signify the most Gothic experience of all, or at least it was so for those who listened to

Edwards's sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." The feeling of loss alone may be fearsome enough, but if one adds to it the emotional burden of being excluded from the spiritual and moral canons, the outcome is all the more frightening and despairing; the narrator in Lovecraft's "The Outsider" can testify to this. A provoked dialogue between these two literary works–which exposes some of the ever-present subjects in Gothic American literature–unveils three different levels of interpretation or interfaces, namely those dealing with the evil nature of humanity, the Gothic concept of otherness, and the governing emotion of fear. This dialogue affords an illustration of human misery and helplessness in which "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" emphasizes the cause and foresees the effect brought about by "The Outsider."

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

JONATHAN EDWARDS AND THE PURITAN REVIVAL

Jonathan Edwards has been described by scholars and by the Christian community as one of the most influential thinkers and philosophers of the United States. He was born in 1703, in East Windsor, Connecticut. His philosophical and academic precocity led him to attend Yale College, where he graduated in 1720, at the age of sixteen. Afterwards, he became a preacher in New York, a tutor at Yale College, and a pastor in Northampton from 1725 to 1750. As a pastor, and later as a missionary, he produced a great amount of writings that dealt especially with religion and the state of men in the grace of God.

Jonathan Edwards was a Puritan. The Puritan movement rose from the Anglican Church during the second half of the XVI century in England. Its main objective was to reform the Anglican Church after the Elizabethan period tried to establish norms in an attempt to create a space of understanding between Catholicism and the Protestant reformation ideas. The Puritan theology is a version of Calvinism. It affirms the sinful nature that inherently characterizes humans. It also proclaims that God has determined who will be saved and who will be damned. No one can be sure about his or her fate after death. However, it is important to note that for the Puritans, conversion, in which the Holy Ghost illuminates the human soul and changes it from sinfulness to holiness, is an indication of being part of the group chosen for salvation, that is, the Elect.

The Puritans came to New England wanting to break free from the Anglican Church and because they wanted to find religious freedom in America. Jonathan Edwards followed the Puritan faith and was a key figure during the Puritan Revival in America during the 1700s. He "came upon the scene after a period of considerable lifelessness in the churches" (Lloyd-Jones). After a period of religious prosperity when the first Puritans arrived in the Mayflower, the people's faith had decayed, and the pastors and ministers did not see the same amount of fervor in their communities. Also, many followers were parting from the severe terms imposed by the Puritans in social, sexual, and religious aspects.

It is in this context that Edwards addressed his sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" to the community of Entfield, Connecticut, on July 8th, 1741. Although this community was described as "unusually listless and indifferent" (Tyler 419), before Edwards finished his sermon, people "were bowed down in agony and terror" (419). A sermon such as Edwards' was a key element for the Puritan Revival movement because it sought to make people turn around in their normal and religious ways. By means of stating the basic Puritan ideals–the inherently sinful state of humans and the concept of Providence–and adding the image of wrathful, implacable God, Edwards used fear in order to scare people into believing that they were rightfully doomed if they did not convert or have a strong experience with God. Conversion was crucial to Puritan spirituality; therefore, Edwards made it the main objective of the Revival. By foreseeing the outcome of peoples' lives as damned, Edwards was trying to generate more conversions and a deeper feeling of the self-discipline and introspection that were so characteristic of the Puritan faith for he believed in "a direct and immediate influence of the Spirit, and in sudden and dramatic conversion" (Lloyd-Jones).

LOVECRAFT AND HIS PESSIMISTIC FICTION

Howard Phillips Lovecraft was born on August 20th, 1890, in Providence, Rhode Island. Paradoxically, the name of his hometown, to which he was so emotionally and nostalgically linked throughout his whole life–so as to have suffered from serious emotional outbreaks when away from it–, illustrates perhaps one of the most controversial issues that may be applied to his work as a determinist and to his place in an American literary tradition that was marked by the contemplation of divine intervention as a powerful force. Although Lovecraft was far from religious, he did not escape the burden of having grown up in a Christian environment that valued the role of Providence very much. Although not a practitioner of the old religious traditions of his nation, he did look at his world from a pessimistic point of view that, in his context, seems to have originated in many of the old Puritan beliefs. The treatment of free will versus providential intervention, as neglected as it was by many of his contemporary writer colleagues, certainly influenced Lovecraft in the elaboration of his philosophy.

In spite of the cheerful brightness that so intensively blinded his contemporaries, Lovecraft could see through and recognize some of the most despairing and uneasy realities about his universe. During the "roaring twenties," it is said, most Americans were unconcerned about the dark side of life. They were too busy enjoying the prosperity of this decade; hence, thinking about the hopelessness and helplessness of humanity might have even seemed absurd. However, Lovecraft could foresee some of the misfortune that would scourge his society at the end of this prosperous time and expressed it through his weird fiction. With this new literary style, he endeavored to convey a sense of eeriness that entailed and explained many of the most despicable human emotions. "The one test

of the really weird," he maintained, "is simply this–whether or not there be excited in the reader a profound sense of dread, and of contact with unknown spheres and powers" (Lovecraft, "Supernatural Horror in Literature"). "Lovecraft's horror," writes Stuart B. Kelly about one of this author's publications, "is a metaphysical horror. Mankind is a brief, fleeting species in a universe populated by chaotic and inconceivable entities." To this extent, weird fiction became an instrument for the elaboration of an intricate philosophy that conceived human nature as utterly devoid of will and hope, of "light" or "sun outdoors" (Lovecraft, "The Outsider" 175). "Against it," says Lovecraft talking about his weird fiction, "are discharged all the shafts. . . of a naïvely insipid idealism which deprecates that aesthetic motive and calls for a didactic literature to 'uplift' the reader toward a suitable degree of smirking optimism" ("Supernatural"). But in the end, no buoyancy is valid in "a universe gone out of killer" (Kelly).

THE DIALOGUE

"Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God" and "The Outsider" share a series of characteristics that link them when analyzing human despair and doom. In spite of their different historical contexts, their philosophical underpinnings tend to look at the ease of evil human nature, otherness, and fear in rather toning ways. One of the elements that seems to enhance the conditions for a dialogue between the two works is the treatment of knowledge and realization. The longing for light–either metaphorical or metaphysical–that comes through knowledge is definitely significant for both Edwards's audience and Lovecraft's monster. Nevertheless, the process of acquiring that knowledge results in varying situations. For Edwards, knowledge represents a tool for his audience to prevent a tragic end. They might have a possibility to escape the spiritual death that is allegedly awaiting them if only they heeded his sermon and obeyed its words. That is, knowing is having an opportunity; knowledge may signify salvation. On the other hand, Lovecraft presents realization as, says Daniel Ust, "a kind of mental anguish," as the last door leading to damnation. In the case of his protagonist, he is already damned, for he belongs to the underworld, but he does not really experience his misfortune until he realizes it, until he learns about it, until he knows. This antagonism in the approach to knowledge as either a hint of hope or the last calamity gives way to a further appreciation of determinism in different periods in the history of American literature. While knowledge may have been first perceived as closely linked to Providence and the Divine Word, it later appears in Lovecraft as an imminent trap for those who dare to climb a horrid tower, a view that is already present in the Genesis.[1]

1 The Tower of Babel passage in Genesis chapter 11, like Lovecraft's story, also underscores the terrible consequences of an immoderate ambition for knowledge and discovery.

Another way to begin to understand the literary dialogue that takes place between Edwards and Lovecraft is the question of how "The Outsider" unconsciously recalls a past that seems to echo Edwards's sermon. "Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God," in turn, was intended to warn its audience against a fatal end, which somehow happens to be experienced by the outsider in Lovecraft's thriller. "Anxiety" says Johanna Bourke, "overwhelms us from within: a suggestion of impeding loss, dread of failure, a premonition of doom." This "premonition" is what Edwards takes advantage of for fleshing out his sermon. Based on the possibility of catastrophe, he manages to frighten his audience so as to cause a powerful effect on them and their decisions. The actual "doom," on the other hand, is what Lovecraft's character experiences from beginning to end, although, as mentioned before, he does not realize it at first. However, Lovecraft's initial words in this story do insinuate some consciousness of a certain past: "Unhappy is he to whom the memories of childhood bring only fear and sadness. Wretched is he who looks back upon lone hours in vast and dismal chambers" ("The Outsider" 175). Besides the obvious references to loneliness and gloom, this and a number of other passages in the story suggest that there exists in the narrator's mind a collection of remembrances about a past in which his current condition might have been foreseen. This cause-effect relationship, furthermore, emphasizes on the fact that regardless of the practical validity of this hypothesis, the treatment of human fate does portray recurrent and perennial qualities, some of which must come before others and affect them in one way or another. To sum up, if seen through the lenses of a rhetorical elucidation and transcending the narrative boundaries of one single discourse, "Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God" and "The Outsider" are both the concretization of a historical discourse on determinism. The former, then, presents a perception of sin and God's wrath as the cause of an inevitable human catastrophe, whereas the latter has already conceived that catastrophe as a result of human depravity from which there is no way out. The dialogue between Edwards's sermon and Lovecraft's story continues. It unfolds in particular by addressing three different but related thematic interfaces addressed below: evil human nature, otherness, and fear.

EVIL HUMAN NATURE

> There are people for whom evil means only a maladjustment with *things*. . . But there are others for whom evil is no mere relation of the subject to particular outer things, but something more radical and general, a wrongness or vice in his essential nation, which no alteration of the environment or any superficial rearrangements of the inner self can cure, and which requires a supernatural remedy. (James 131-32)

EDWARDS: WICKEDNESS AND SIN

Jonathan Edwards opens his sermon "Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God" with Deuteronomy 32.35: "Their foot shall slide in due time," referring to all the wicked men

and women who disgrace God (200). According to the Puritan faith, all humans are born in sin and are tainted by sin throughout their lives. Inherently, humans have an evil nature that goes against God. Edwards reinforces this concept by repeatedly asserting that men are wicked and sinners. His main purpose is to redirect his followers onto the right path for many have gone astray. "Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God" is the epitomical example of the Puritan Revival because it addresses the problems that the Church was suffering. Edwards exposes those problems and bases his ideas on the belief, as seen before, that sin is more apparent in those whose faith in God and commitment to the Church are not strong.

From the beginning of the sermon, Edwards explains that those whose foot shall slide in due time are "the wicked unbelieving Israelites" (200), who preached the rules of the Ten Commandments but did not live by them. In this case, Edwards is denouncing hypocrisy in the Church as a source of wickedness and as a sign that many congregations were growing weak after the decay of their faith. Another example comes later in the sermon, when Edwards says, "There are in the souls of wicked men those hellish principles reigning that would presently kindle and flame out into hell fire" (202). These words denote the strong Puritan censorship of worldly matters such as the loss of mortal values and the increase of sexual liberties. Again, the need of a revival came from the increasing decay of the strict Puritan values. Another criticism against the congregation is addressed in the following way: "There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending His solemn worship" (206). This denounces the lack of interest that parishioners showed in the Sabbath, that is, their lack of respect towards the Sabbath and the worship ceremony.

Overall, Edwards is reinforcing the basic Puritan concept of the inherently evil nature of human beings and portraying the "new" sins in the communities. This evil nature will damn humans to hell, and Edwards, along with the Puritan faith, is sure about it. "They are already under a sentence of condemnation to hell," he asserts (201). Not only did the Puritans know with accuracy that sin was ever-present in the souls of men, but they also knew that sinners had their space in hell with no chance of redemption or forgiveness.

LOVECRAFT: THE UNCLEAN MONSTER

According to Daniel Ust, H. P. Lovecraft was a materialist, a fatalist, and he termed himself a determinist; "[h]is world was governed by deterministic laws." Faithful to this perception of the universe, he presents the physical description of his narrator/protagonist in "The Outsider" as the epitome of decadence and wickedness. Although nothing in the words of the protagonist leads the reader to think him evil, it is through the detailing of his physical appearance and the effect that it produces on others, and on himself, that Lovecraft preaches his deterministic conception of humanity. From the very beginning of the story, the narrator is aware of his hopeless situation; he refers to

himself as "the dazed, the disappointed; the barren, the broken" ("The Outsider" 175). "Lovecraft's overall view of man," says Ust, "is a minuscule, pathetic failure," and this is precisely the way in which the outsider sees himself, especially after he realizes what he really is.

As part of this realization, the outsider also learns about his own evil nature, about "the unconceivable, indescribable, and unmentionable monstrosity" of which he had no awareness ("The Outsider" 179). Nevertheless, the "nearness" of these malevolent features, first seen through a mirror and then internalized as part of the self, makes them all the more human (180). The outsider himself acknowledges this humanness in the evil creature that he beholds under the arch when he admits that, in spite of his "horror," he saw "in its eaten-away and bone-revealing outlines a leering, abhorrent travesty on the human shape" (179).

The study of evil human nature is one of the most puzzling and pervasive ways of approaching mankind as a spiritual entity. It has been present throughout the psychological and philosophical occupation of literature. Specifically in the American literary tradition, from Edwards to Lovecraft, the evil in men has made itself heard, either as the self-evident reason why humanity is to be inevitably punished or else as the result of that punishment. In more social terms, evil manifests itself as an inescapable reality. "Men," writes Ust, "cannot even be free inside the confines of their communities if there are plenty of malign (and successful) conspiracies ready to control society." For Lovecraft, in this story, such self-destructive urges, which have taken over society and the individual, are embodied by a horrible monster whose sight cannot be stood by anyone and whose effect on others is so insidious and fierce that "flight" finally becomes "universal" ("The Outsider" 179). The narrator, still without realizing that he is talking about himself, describes it as "a compound of all that is unclean, uncanny, unwelcome, abnormal, and detestable" (179), as embodiment of evil.

OTHERNESS

> At the same time it was tending to obliterate the strangers of the external other, Western civilization found an interior other. From the classical age to the end of romanticism (i.e., down to our own day), writers and moralists have continued to discover that the person is not *one*–or is even nothing–that *Je est un autre*, or a simple echo chamber, a hall of mirrors. We no longer believe in wild men in the forests, but we have discovered the beast in man. (Todorov 248-49)

EDWARDS: TO BE THE DAMNED

Jonathan Edwards uses the concept of "the other" as a powerful tool in his revival sermon. His position as a minister is of greater station than that of the listeners in the

congregation; therefore, he has the power of speech and the power of knowledge. Also, being a minister, a man of God, grants him a special position among the other people because he is supposed to be and needed to be "holier" than the rest in order to lead them to salvation. Edwards uses all these points in favor of his image to preach the doom of the state of "the other." Since he holds knowledge, and he is not "the other," he has to instruct the congregation on how to avoid damnation.

In "Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God," Edwards explains how every person in the congregation is "the other," that is, sinful people who deserve to go to hell and to be forgotten by God. Since his main objective is to convert people and make them closer to the Holy Spirit, he has to present the image of those who have been damned by God, that is, the sinful, the wicked, and the evil men who have provoked God's wrath. This evil nature is what makes them "the other." The image of the devil is portrayed as it "stands ready to fall upon them and seize them as his own" (202), which is very powerful as the devil is the antithesis of God; therefore, if God designates who "the other" is, the devil is the primordial image of "the other." The chosen are part of God, but the damned are "the other." Seen from a different point of view, this equation is ever-present in the Puritan faith in the form of the Covenant of Grace.

Edwards specifically tells the congregation what the purpose of his sermon is after he presents the ten considerations of why God is angry with them and why He will punish them. In his application, Edwards states that the "use of this awful subject may be awakening unconverted persons in this congregation" (204); this is the revival of the faith in the people. He goes on to provide a detailed description of hell as a "world of misery, that lake of burning brimstone,. . . the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God" (204), in order for people to become scared of being "the other," and so that they convert and experience the Spirit of God.

LOVECRAFT: THE OTHER OUTSIDER

For Lovecraft, the concepts of the trap, the truth, and the necessity of being the other adopted such legitimate qualities that they led him to treat these subjects with a rather exquisite explicitness, the title of the story being the ultimate proof of that. Biographer S. T. Joshi describes the author as an isolated, nostalgic man who was constantly assaulted by psychological and neurological disturbances. In this world of hermitage, Lovecraft found many of his themes and endeavored to develop them in order to demonstrate how dejected and pitiful humanity is. Otherness is one of the main topics of his story "The Outsider," in which the narrator learns about his despairing situation as a complete stranger in his universe, first, gradually through the hints that his intuition grants him, and later, appallingly and abruptly through the sight of his own image in the mirror under the arch. Here, the monster, the outsider, discovers the tragedy of his otherness.

"We can discover the other in ourselves," says Todorov, "realize we are not a homogenous substance, radically alien to whatever is not us" (9). We can actually learn about our human nature, that our isolation and inability to understand ourselves is a clear sign of "the other" within us, of the Lovecraftian monster that inhabits us. This monster first acknowledges the fact that his own instinctual drives are compelling him to "reach beyond to *the other*," which is in itself foreshadowing what is to fall upon him ("The Outsider" 175). Later in the story, after he sees the corporeal manifestation of this other, he has to admit his alien nature for he is able to rationalize neither his existence nor his presence. "God knows it was not of this world," he says, referring to the monster in the looking glass (179). Finally, the narrator painfully and resignedly says about himself, "I know that I am an outsider; a stranger in this century and among those who are still men" (181).

FEAR

> "'Tis evident that the very same event, which by certainly wou'd produce grief or joy, gives always rise to fear or hope, when only a probable and uncertain" (Hume 439-40).

EDWARDS: A MEANS FOR CONVERSION

As seen before, the main goal of the Puritan revival of the 1740s was to rekindle the spirituality in the human soul. The main tool used in "Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God" is fear. According to historian Johanna Bourke, "Religion and 'other worldly' beliefs have undergone dramatic shifts in respect to fear, but they retain a central position in producing fearful stimuli." The reaction expected from the stimuli in the sermon is to make people convert and become good Christians.

Edwards' strategy is to present a terrifying God who is wrathful, unmerciful and vengeful. The first move is to state that God is very angry with humans for their wickedness, and Edwards repeats this concept all throughout his sermon. The next move is to say that God can show his wrath at any moment: "He is not only able to cast wicked men into hell but He can most easily do it" (201). Arguments like this necessarily keep an audience in constant suspense and anxiety; moreover, they reinforce in people the image of this terrible God who is looking for revenge–like the God in the Old Testament–instead of a gentler God who is all about forgiveness–like in the New Testament.

Edwards presents three terrifying metaphors that illustrate the wrath of God. The first metaphor presents God's wrath as the increasing, roaring waters in a damn, which are ready to exterminate sinful men but are held back by nothing but "the mere pleasure of God" (205). The next metaphor is that of a bow, which represents God's anger. It is ready to be bent and shoot an arrow of justice right through the hearts of evil men. In the last image, Edwards presents God holding people over the mouth of hell, ready to throw

them into the fire, just like a person can cast a spider into flames. All these examples were commonly given to the congregation. They are horrendous images inasmuch as they are so closely related to the listeners' lives.

This terrible fury of God expands to greater spheres such as hate and abhorrence. "He will not only hate you, but He will have you in the utmost contempt," claims Edwards (208). Now, people not only fear being damned, but also being the source of such hatred from God. This, of course, creates great levels of anxiety since the audience dreads the worst outcome for whatever action they perform. Edwards's ultimate goal is to "forethink," to think forward on what could happen to the Church in the short run and to the human soul in the long one.

LOVECRAFT: AN ASSAILING FORCE

"After all," says Bourke, "all societies have regarded themselves as fearful." This may be perfectly applied to American society in the sense that fear has always been an important ingredient, both for the Puritan beliefs of the Revival led by Edwards and for the pessimistic attack that Lovecraft casts upon the frivolous cheerfulness of the nineteen twenties. Of course, the aura of insecurity and imminent disaster–first spiritual and then moral and psychological–that infected these two cases was the detonating factor that impelled fear to become an efficient and useful tool to provoke change and express nonconformity. "Uncertainty and danger are always allied," says Lovecraft ("Supernatural"), and Edwards seems to have known this all too well for he managed to use them as fuel in his famous sermon. But Lovecraft did more than that; as evident in "The Outsider," he acknowledged the power of fear as a nature-binding force. In "Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God," as explained above, fear was mainly a tool for causing change and preventing sinful acts that would inevitably result in a terrible end; in "The Outsider," however, that change does not seem to have occurred, and what was just dreadful probability for Edwards has become a tragic reality for the narrator in Lovecraft's story. His whole being has been marked by fear since he is destined to provoke it in whoever gazes at him, himself included. Unlike Edwards's audience, the outsider has no alternative; his fear goes beyond the mere preconception of a threatening event; he himself embodies fear.

According to Lovecraft himself, "the oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear" ("Supernatural"). Observing the universality and preeminence of fear, therefore, is the key to understand his story. Somehow, a certain dread has always been there for the narrator, either as a part of his memory or as the actual effect produced by his surroundings on him. In spite of the eerie normality with which he sees his situation at first and the uncannily familiar depictions that he provides when he describes places that seem rather horrifying to the reader, the outsider can still feel fear more or less as any human being would. He narrates his attempts to flee from his dwelling place in a very earnest and effective way:

> Once I tried to escape from the forest, but as I went farther from the castle the shade grew denser and the air more filled with brooding fear; so that I ran frantically back lest I lose my way in a labyrinth of nighted silence.
>
> But more ghastly and terrible still was the slowness of my progress; for climb as I might, the darkness overhead grew no thinner, and the new chill as of haunted and venerable mould assailed me. ("The Outsider" 176)

In the same way he describes what he saw in the mirror and the effect that it caused on him and on others: "I beheld in full, frightful vividness the unconceivable, indescribable, and unmentionable monstrosity which had by its simple appearance changed a merry company to herd of delirious fugitives" (179). All these words put together provide a view of fear that transcends the ordinary and explains it as an extremely powerful force that may assail and bind even the most fearful beings.

In his book *The Problem of Freedom and Determinism*, philosopher Edward D'Angelo admits that "one of the perennial problems of philosophy has been the problem of free will" (1). To what extent is humanity capable of making its own decisions? Is there indeed a stronger force that determines human fate? Is there any hope for the future? These and other questions have bewildered American Gothic writers for centuries. From Edwards to Lovecraft–and on to many later writers–free will and its foe, determinism, have waged a persistent battle. This conflict, however, is fairly multifaceted. It usually takes place at as many levels as those at which two different literary works like "Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God" and "The Outsider" may be confronted. In this specific case, determinism seems to have prevailed–though at varying degrees–over free will, both on the religious and on the merely philosophical battlefield. As defined by D'Angelo "Determinism. . . is the view that every event has a cause and is in principle predictable" (2). Jonathan Edwards embraced this conception all too well as he warned his audience about what *might* occur to them. A "soft" kind of determinism, that which is "compatible with moral responsibility and punishment," says D'Angelo (36), pervaded his sermon. In it, although the final cataclysm is certainly awaiting humanity, there is still some hope of redemption through correction. Notwithstanding, a Gothic sense of fear is central to the structure and interpretive effects of Edward's work. On the other hand, there is also a "hard" kind of determinism, which, according to both Paul Edwards and William James is more authentic and "incompatible with free choice and moral responsibility" (qtd. in D'Angelo 48). The fight between the free and the confined spirits, therefore, becomes all the more ferocious, and as a result, determinism gains impetus and secures itself a place in the philosophical drives of Gothic American literature. As opposed to Edwards's audience in the eighteenth century, Lovecraft's monster in "The Outsider" is experiencing the tragedy that had been predicted more than one hundred years earlier, but with no option to escape from it. The implacable Gothic ghost of determinism in American literature has finally materialized in this text.

Regardless of the type of determinism that American literature may have chosen at different times throughout its history, the fact is that it has always been there, especially in Gothic texts, either in the form of religious beliefs or as a reactionary impulse against frivolity and trivial optimism. In making use of the notion of Providence in his sermons, Jonathan Edwards remained faithful to the deterministic views of his era. H.P. Lovecraft, on the other hand, and apart from the other alternative philosophies that were available in his time, could not–or did not wish to–escape the power of determinism. The three different interfaces that constitute the dialogue between Edward's and Lovecraft's works are clear instances in which the deterministic ghost comes into sight, whether as the cause or as the effect of despair and tragedy. In both cases, the Gothic finds its connection with determinism and reveals how successfully the latter has fueled fear in American literature.

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Ilse M. Bussing holds a Bachelor of Arts in Comparative Literature, from the College of William and Mary, a Master's in Latin American Literature from the University of Costa Rica, and a Ph.D. in English Literature from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. Her Ph.D. thesis, "The Haunted House in Mid-to-Late Victorian Gothic Fiction," explores the convergence of architecture and literature in a particular site, the Victorian home; this topic reveals one of her main research interests, the study of space and setting in fiction. Her publications focus mostly on the Gothic and on Victorian works. Ilse Bussing is professor in English Literature at the Modern Languages Department in the University of Costa Rica, and in the Master's in English Literature program, where she teaches a Gothic Studies specialty course.

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Anthony López Get holds a Master's in English Literature from the University of Costa Rica. He is currently working on his dissertation about the representation of the abnormal subject in disciplinary societies in both film and literature, as his graduation project in the Ph.D. program at the University of Costa Rica on Studies on Society and Culture (Doctorado en Estudios de la Sociedad y la Cultura). He is professor of Language and Literature in the Modern Languages Department at the University of Costa Rica. He has conducted research on Cultural Studies and Aesthetics, mainly on aesthetics of the Grotesque.

This is a compilation of interdisciplinary articles that deal with Gothic subjects, and it is divided in two volumes: the first, **Dark Latitudes: Mapping Gothic Sites and Mediums**, with articles in English, and **Oscuras latitudes: una cartografía de los estudios góticos**, in Spanish.

The editors are professors at UCR's School of Modern Languages; Ilse M. Bussing holds a Ph.D. in English Literature (specializing in Gothic Studies) from the University of Edinburgh, and M.L. Anthony López Get, who does research in the Gothic, and is working on his graduation project in the Society and Culture Studies doctorate program at UCR. Both volumes include introductions in which the editors describe the international development of Gothic Studies as an academic discipline, and detail the different categories in which the articles appear: *XIX Century Gothic, Contemporary Gothic, Vampires, The Double, Gender Studies, Aesthetics and the Arts,* and *Latin American Gothic*. The essays, by Costa Rican and international authors, explore how this movement surfaces in diverse genres: literature, film, architecture, music and photography. This collection is intended to broaden the global influence and interest in Gothic Studies.

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